

# OSCAR WILDE.

## Visit of the English Aethete to Dayton.

### He Inspects the Art School, the Soldiers' Home,

### And Other Objects of Interest in the City.

### What He Thought of It All--His Lecture.

Oscar Wilde and servant, Ireland, and E. A. Vella, Manager, of New York, were among the names registered at the Beckel House yesterday morning. The Journal man, having sent up his card, was duly ushered into the presence of the English poet and art reformer. He was seated on a sofa, with a table and writing materials before him, but rose to greet his visitor cordially, and requested him to be seated. The large athletic figure was attired in mouse colored velvet coat, light pantaloons, low moccasin shoes and dark blue embroidered stockings. There was little in the face to be called handsome. The smooth heavy boyish features were surmounted by a broad forehead and a profusion of long auburn hair, that was combed back without an attempt to part, and fell back of the ears without a wave, nearly reaching the shoulders. There was a suggestion of western picturesque in the long hair, but it was without the wavy ringlets of Buffalo Bill, and more vividly recalled the mannerisms of Joaquin Miller, the poet of the Sierras. The whole contour of the face was not unlike that of George Elliott, which appeared some months ago in *Scribner's Magazine*. The lips are thick with a feminine expression about the mouth, the eyes are small and have a frank hearty expression, twinkling with amusement and brightening with enthusiasm, when he dwelt on subjects that pleased him. He proved an excellent conversationalist, with an easy manner that did not force itself on the listener but interested, by an apparent earnestness, and made him a confident when the speaker threw back with a toss his heavy head of hair and indulged in a hearty laugh.

Professor Broome had arranged to conduct Mr. Wilde to such objects of interest as his time would permit during the afternoon, and directly after dinner a carriage was taken at the hotel by these gentlemen, accompanied by representatives from the *Democrat* and the *Journal*. The first visit was to the Presbyterian Church, on Third street, which Mr. Broome desired to show to the guest as a specimen of the most advanced style taken in decoration. He appeared pleased and expressed admiration at the decoration of the interior.

"It is really quite excellent," said the poet. "I am surprised; its dimensions are perfect, and these polished granite columns are beautiful. They should not have been both alike, however; one of them of red Scotch granite would have afforded so charming a contrast. In America, you have such fine building stones. I do not like those window through. Why were they made with a transparent design and such glaring colors?"

Mr. Broome explained that the use of cathedral glass was in its infancy in this part of the country.

"Figures would have been much prettier and in better taste. The work in stained glass is a peculiar art, and so great an artist as Sir Joshua Reynolds has made in our country a flagrant error in it."

The drive from the city was through Dayton View, and the conversation turned upon the objects of interest that encountered the eyes. The comments these objects excited were not of affection, but of the expression of the school which he represented. The caricature of Oscar Wilde in *"Patience"* has no resemblance to the real. The criticisms which the aesthetic school prompted, were not ridiculous; they were always natural, and with apparent truth suggesting errors or changes in objects which have come to be regarded unchangeable as a matter of course. His eye quickly caught what was attractive or amusing, and his appreciation was always hearty. The jail, with its ornamented front, he found no amusing that he threw back his head and gave utterance to a hearty laugh, and for the instant thought it was only so called for a joke.

"What is the name of your river, here?"

have seen Clara Morris, and I admire her. I have just come from Chicago, but I didn't care to see them kill pigs. What a beautiful flower this is (counting a flower he held in his hand), single flowers are always the most beautiful. Double flowers always look to me like a woman with a pretty face but no figure, and he threw his head back laughing in his hearty manner.

#### THE LECTURE.

Mr. Wilde was introduced by Professor Broome as the representative of the best art of the time, who would place before the audience the principles of the art that has so much interested many people of Dayton the past two years.

Mr. Wilde appeared attired in a thoroughly aesthetic costume, velvet coat and knee breeches, with lace at the sleeves and a lace tie, black stockings and moccasin pumps. His manner and accentuation were extremely English, giving the rising inflection to all his sentences. He said that he did not intend to present an abstract definition of beauty. He referred to the beauty of decoration as an art, that it was a mark showing that the artist worked with heart and head. Designs in decoration that were common place, machine made, showed no good power. He depreciated machine made work as ruinous to good taste. The furniture would creak and snap when you sat down on it, would warp before the fire. Cast iron stoves that flooded the country from New York to San Francisco were decorated with garlands of black roses or lilies, and surmounted with funeral urns. Why could not more tasteful and more appropriate designs be made. He compared this ready made machine work with the artistic designs hammered and wrought in the past when the workman put thought and taste to his work. It was the second hand vulgarity that he depreciated, that lessened the value of all things; the fine art of the handicraftsman improved with age like the ancient cathedrals. He did not object to machinery or its use, but he wished to see it used nobly. For effecting this he referred to the influence of surrounding the effect of modern cities, and the want of clear air, golden sunlight and bright joyous color. He spoke in high terms of the work of the Dayton Art School. Its bright airy and pleasant location. The work of the school was free from those defects of bad taste, that were so noticeable in much of the decorative work in the large cities of the country. The painting of moonlight landscapes on dinner plates and sunset scenes in soup dishes. He instance two pieces of work in particular of a lady of the school, one of an abstract design and the other of a simple color. A flower garden is needed, he said, to improve the surroundings of the school, and a museum, where examples of the best decorative art could be studied. There was none of the work but what was on the side of national principle, and he saw no reason why this school should not become as perfect as any in the country. The art of the future, he thought, would be Democratic art. No part of the world is richer in material than America, and the best art the world had seen has been accomplished by republicans. True art teaches the spirit of tolerance, it is far above petty discord, it speaks but one language and its virtues are catholic.

Mr. Wilde leaves for Columbus this morning. He expects to arrange to-day for a trip to Australia in July, and from Australia he goes to pass several months in China and Japan to study the technique of the schools there.

Communicated.

#### Oscar's Lecture.

It is hard to realize that I have seen him in his beauty and heard him in his wisdom. Would that I had also pressed his tender hand and twined my fingers in his falling tresses! When I first saw the announcement that the divine, the only Oscar, would be visible to the naked eye in Dayton, and tread upon that vulgar common green carpet on the Music Hall stage, I determined that I would see the performance if I had to take in washing, or what is the same thing, make my washwoman wait. And I did. I confess to some prejudice against the colors of Wilde. Yellow I had never admitted, my early impressions of it being always in connection with mustard poultices, coated tongues and bilious eyes. I am ashamed too, to confess that the lily was never my favorite flower. It has an attenuated, ghastly appearance, suited more for the city of the dead than the homes of the living. But I have been trying to educate myself up to the point of admiration, and possibly adoration. Yet I have now a dreadful consciousness of falling immeasurably short of the true ideal.

The fair Oscar tripped upon the stage last night with the veritable short pants on that he has been wearing ever since his arrival in this "beastly" country. His calves (from fair to middling) were dressed in a neat suit of black, and looked like half-blackened stove pipes. If he had garters on I couldn't see them, and I was afraid all the time that something, would fall. He must have buttoned the hose to

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April 7, 1882.

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"What is the name of your river, here? Miami! Ah, how lovely are those Indian names; there are so many of them beautiful. But some of the eastern towns I have met have barbarous beastly names. There was one Greeceville; that is simply horrible. I would never lecture in such a town unless its name was changed. That is a beautiful scene!" he exclaimed, as the carriage passed over the river. "You should never let your manufacturers pollute the air with smoke. In many towns in England they have ordinances requiring all smoke to be consumed. Ruskin would not go to Manchester until they got rid of their smoke, and they finally did it. When I called at the residence of Mr. Probasco in Cincinnati and looked down on the filthy cloud that hung upon the city, I was astounded—how long can beauty exist among so much that is vile!"

"Your visit to San Francisco was pleasant," asked Mr. Brewer.

"Oh, I enjoyed it immensely. It is a wonderful country, a garden of the world. When I passed over that vast space from the mountains to the Mississippi, where everything seemed a monotonous brown, where even the soil and the Indians have fled from the rattle of the train, it seemed as if Nature had exhausted herself in forming the delightful country of California, and could do no more for these illimitable plains. There is a flavor of Bret Harte over this country. He is a charming artist; his work is so finished and complete. And then there is Joaquin Miller. I love the West and its people. I like to visit your universities. There are so many of them distributed over the country. They make its life blood. Your universities reach into the people and effect a greater work than ours. They ought to cultivate more the physical as well as the mental man; a good gymnasium should be a part of every university. There is only one thing I utterly dislike in America; that is its cigarettes. At home I rarely smoked cigars, always cigarettes; they were African tobacco, rolled in Egypt; but I can't smoke those I find here; they are vile, and I have given them quite up. What a peculiar that the brick has in so many of your houses? There should be more color in it; they have a sickly look."

Similar comments were called forth from time to time until the pottery was reached on Summit street. A number of carriages were drawn up before the building, and quite a number of ladies, including Miss Carrie Brown, the President of the Society, Mrs. Bradnard Thresher, Miss Broom, and other members of the classes. Mr. Wilde was introduced to them, and he then passed a short time examining various articles of the work. Two vases by Miss Broome attracted his attention at once, and he complimented them highly for the simplicity. He was also particularly well pleased with the water colors made by members of the classes. In speaking of the work, he said that the amount was smaller than what he saw in Cincinnati, but its quality was very much higher. Though the one young man there, a Mr. Brewer, he said showed the highest artistic talent. He deprecated too great a freedom of style, and urged the cultivation of the senses before the mind. He referred to the use of glaring plain white dishes and the increase of decorated pottery of all kinds, and urged it in the articles of daily use. At the best hotels of New York and San Francisco he was daily served coffee in earthenware half an inch thick, that might serve as valuable weapons of defense. In San Francisco he saw Chinamen drinking from cups delicate as rose leaves, that ladies would have to handle tenderly.

Proceeding to the Soldiers' Home a visit was made to the conservatory and the grove, which were much admired. The party then proceeded to Governor Patrick's headquarters, where Colonel Thomas, Chaplain Earnshaw, Major Wilson, Captain Giddinger were introduced, and after a short stay there and a pleasant chat with the officers visited the Memorial Hall, the dining room and its library, and then returned to the city.

"Have you a poet in Dayton he asked on the return drive."

"The newspaper man replied poets are numerous in the spring time, and there was the usual crop at present."

The aesthetic sighed and turning to the subject of actor, he said there were but two actors in the world. Bernhard and Salvini. Bernhard told me, he continued musing, there were two things worth seeing in this country, the acting of Clara Morris and the way they kill pigs in Chicago. I

my early impressions of it being always in connection with mustard poultices, coated tongues and bilious eyes. I am ashamed too, to confess that the illy was never my favorite flower. It has an attenuated, ghastly appearance, suited more for the city of the dead than the homes of the living. But I have been trying to educate myself up to the point of admiration, and possibly adoration. Yet I have now a dreadful consciousness of falling immeasurably short of the true ideal.

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The material of his suit was wine colored velvet, the coat tails being lined with red silk, quilted. His sleeves were flowing and edged with lace; shirt bosoms ruffled and decorated with long tufts of white silk. On one hand he wore a white kid glove, pulled to the thumb; in the other he held his mate. He has a large head, Roman nose, Irish chin and mouth. Brother Jonathan hands and Irish legs, as he says, his ears were not visible. When talking, he stands quite gracefully, twisting the seal on his tobacco pipe, pointing his glove about and occasionally holding his left arm "kimbo." He drags all the water on the stage, and closed his lecture very soon after he saw the bottom of the glass. He talks deliberately in a conversational style, and a more affected tone than the burlesque of him in "Patience." He defined art to be simply "good work." A machine made chair, of green material and loose joints, that squeaks whenever you sit on it, is not artistic. The most dreadful possible thing to him was the American cast-iron stove. As if it were not gloomy enough of itself, the manufacturers decorate it most absurdly with festoons of ferns, bunches of blue lilies and a funeral urn. Much of the present effort at decorative art is without reason or principle. It must express, earnest thought, be harmonious with the article and its use, and then it will be beautiful. The Dayton Art School has complimented most highly, saying that it was superior to many more pretentious affairs, because he saw nothing there that was not founded on principles of true art, and it was delightfully surrounded by trees and grass and pretty things. He hoped it would soon have a flower garden. One young lady student, he remarked, would stand the highest art test, because she was able to use simple colors and make abstract designs. Mere imitation is a common accomplishment. The dress of the period is horribly sombre. It should be cheerful, graceful, and show individualism. There ought almost to be no sculpture of great men now, because of their dreadful costume. Thus the lecturer wandered along, criticising, feeling and false art in various matters and finally wound up with a smile, a bow and a retreat. The audience was thoughtful enough to applaud him only when he complimented a Dayton institution. The lecture had the rare merit of brevity, and further deponent with me, Mr. Wilde wore, neither ill nor unwearied. The audience was under-sized and the Art School couldn't have made a million out of the enterprise, but the scent of the speaker will hang round it still. As I shall probably never see Mr. Wilde again, I herewith throw him at "unkissed-kiss," and remark that I shall ever remember him as a "most exquisite" young man and "too utterly all bus."

DRESS CIRCLE.

The Picture Sale.

Mr. Johnson's picture sale was continued last night. Only a limited number of bidders appeared and a few excellent pictures were sold at serious sacrifices. But it is pleasing to know that Dayton is to enjoy them. Among the best were two figure pieces bought by Messrs. King and Simms. Mr. Johnson was discouraged with buyer, but will make a final effort this evening at 7:30 o'clock, at No. 124, East Third street, near St. Clair. Parties who desire any picture to be put up, should ask for it.

Short Breath.

O. Bortle, Manchester, N. Y., was troubled with asthma for eleven years. Had been obliged to sit up sometimes ten or twelve nights in succession. Found immediate relief from Thomas' Electric Oil, and is now entirely cured. For sale by H. D. Carrell.

SPECIAL NOTICES.

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